

Appl. No. 09/805,646
Reply dated November 25, 2003
Reply to Office Action mailed August 26, 2003

REMARKS

The present application and its claims are directed to an automated process guidance system and method wherein a user is directed through a complex process, such as employee discipline, using a series of guidance pages.

No claims were amended, Claims 1-10 were cancelled and Claims 11- 19 were added.

Submitted herewith is an Information Disclosure Statement in which Applicant discloses various prior art to the Examiner and the United States Patent and Trademark Office. A \$180 fee accompanies this Information Disclosure Statement.

Applicant has amended the specification, pursuant to the priority claim under 35 USC 120 to the parent application, to include the priority claim. The priority claim was acknowledged in the filing receipt.

REJECTION UNDER 35 USC § 101

In response to the Examiner's rejection of Claims 1-10 as being directed to non-statutory subject matter, Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. In particular, the claims of the application are not directed to an abstract idea as asserted by the Examiner. The claims are directed to a computer implemented process guidance system and method. To further clarify the statutory subject matter of this application, Applicant has submitted a new set of claims and the new set of claims are directed to statutory subject matter and this rejection should therefore be withdrawn.

PRIOR ART REJECTIONS

In response to the Examiner's rejection of Claims 1-5 and 8-10 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 4,866,635 to Kahn et al (hereinafter "Kahn") and the Examiner's rejection of Claims 6-7 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kahn in view of "Official Notice", Applicant respectfully traverses the rejections. In particular, the claims are not anticipated or rendered obvious by the prior art and the "Official Notice" of the Examiner for the reasons set forth below. Therefore, early allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Claim 11

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Claim 11 is not anticipated by Kahn for at least the reason that Claim 11 recites “a logical structure for representing the steps of the process, each node of the structure representing a step in the process and one or more of the steps presenting alternatives to the user requiring the user to make a decision.” Kahn discloses a system for diagnosing a problem wherein a knowledge base is being used to generate questions that are used to diagnose the problem. The Kahn system has the knowledge grouped into failure modes (See Figure 2) so that a particular problem may be identified. Thus, in Kahn, the system gathers facts from the user in order to diagnose a problem of the user. In contrast, the claimed invention is providing facts and information to the user about different steps of a process so that the user can make a decision about a step in the process. For example, the claimed invention may provide the user with information and facts on how to determine the proper compensation for an employee as shown in Figures 13 – 18B. The Kahn system cannot help determine the proper compensation for an employee (a process) nor guide a user through the process.

Furthermore, Claim 11 recites “one or more page fragments each having an associated fragment precondition comprising one of a jurisdiction precondition, an effective date precondition, a site precondition and a union precondition, the page fragment being placed within a guidance page when the precondition is met wherein each guidance page is generated based on the page fragments with met preconditions.” The Examiner asserts that Kahn discloses these page fragments and preconditions at Col. 15, lines 28 – 37. The section cited by the Examiner describes a question hierarchy in which a particular question is asked only when an answer to a prior question has an appropriate answer. Kahn, does not disclose or suggest that the preconditions are one of a jurisdiction precondition, an effective date precondition, a site precondition and a union precondition as claimed. Therefore, Claim 11 is allowable over Kahn.

Claims 12 - 18

Claim 12 is not anticipated by Kahn for at least the reason that Claim 12 recites the logical structure for representing the steps of a process which was distinguished from Kahn above for Claim 11. Furthermore, Claim 12 recites that “each node of the logical structure representing a step in the process and one or more of the steps presenting alternatives to the user requiring the user to make a decision and one or more guidance pages attached to each node of

the logical structure, the guidance pages providing the user of the system with guidance about how to make decision at the current step of the process” that is not disclosed by Kahn. In particular, Kahn does not provide facts/information to a user about the process, such as through guidance pages, that provide a user of the system with guidance about how to make a decision at the current step of the process. Kahn only asks questions of the user in order to gather facts and diagnose a problem. Therefore, Claim 12 is allowable over Kahn.

Claims 13 – 18 are allowable over Kahn for at least the same reasons as Claim 12.

Claims 16 – 18 are further distinguishable over Kahn because Kahn does not describe a decision process as described above. Furthermore, Kahn does not describe the particular decision processes recited in Claims 16 – 18 and therefore these claims are allowable over Kahn.

Claim 19

Claim 19 is not anticipated by Kahn at least because Claim 19 recites that “the steps of the process further comprising at least providing information to the user about the process, providing a guidance page to the user to provide advice about a process decision of the user and recommending an action to be taken by the user based on the process.” Kahn does not provide information to the user about the process, provide a guidance page to the user to provide advice about a process decision and recommend an action or decision at each step of the process. Furthermore, Kahn does not describe “the computer system generates the process guidance user interface based on the nodes of the logical structure to guide a user through the process” as set forth in Claim 19. In particular, the output from Kahn does not guide a user through a process and therefore does not anticipate Claim 19. Therefore, Claim 19 is allowable over Kahn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 11- 19 are allowable over the prior art cited by the Examiner and early allowance of these claims and the application is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to call Applicant’s attorney at the number below in order to speed the prosecution of this application.

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The Commissioner is authorized to charge any deficiencies in fees and credit any overpayment of fees to Deposit Account No. 07-1896.

Respectfully submitted,

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